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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [OPRC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: FEBRUARY 13, 2009

Summary: Advisor to PM on the Interior Rehman Malik's acknowledgement that the "Mumbai attacks were partly planned in Pakistan" dominated headlines in all newspapers on Friday. All newspapers also front-paged the report that Indian Foreign Minister Mukherjee called Islamabad's much-awaited response as a "positive step" but also expressed hope that Islamabad would "take more credible measures" to dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism on its soil. In an exclusive story from its Washington-based correspondent, the English daily, "Dawn," reported that State Department Spokesman Wood also welcomed the Islamabad's response, by stating that "it showed Pakistan's seriousness in fighting terrorism." Newspapers reported that Ambassador Holbrooke met several political leaders including Nawaz Sharif and Shujaat Hussain and listened to their views on the U.S.-Pak relations and the overall security situation in the region.

Most major dailies ran editorials on the recent telephone conversation between President Obama and President Zardari. The centrist national daily, "The News," wrote: "The initiative taken by Barack Obama must be seized at this time as an opportunity to move forward and ensure that Pakistan remains a central planner in the tactics to be used to defeat militancy." The second largest Urdu daily, "Nawa-i-Waqt," noted that the conversation between the two Presidents "strengthen the impression that the U.S. President convinced President Zardari for jointly fighting the war on terror with renewed fervor; notwithstanding the evident impending defeat of the U.S. and NATO." The Islamabad-based rightist daily, "Pakistan Observer," opined that the call "signifies the importance that Washington attaches to Pakistan and the need for greater consultations and exchange of views so as to forge understanding on issues of mutual interest." End Summary.

News Stories

"Mumbai Attacks - Part Of Plot Hatched In Pakistan, Says Malik" "The News" (02/13)

"Pakistan on Thursday acknowledged for the first time that the Mumbai attacks were partly planned in Pakistan and that it has arrested six suspects, including the 'main operator.' In its first detailed response to the dossier provided by India, Pakistan said criminal cases had been registered against nine suspects on charges of 'abetting, conspiracy and facilitation' of a terrorist act."

"Development Positive" "The Nation" (02/13)

"Lowering heat on Pakistan and terming Islamabad's much-awaited response to the dossier of evidence on Mumbai terror attack as 'positive,' India on Thursday promised to get back to Islamabad with 'whatever' more information it can share after examining its queries."

"India Calls It Positive Step, Wants More Credible Measures" "Dawn" (02/13)

"India on Thursday welcomed the arrest of Mumbai terror suspects by Pakistan as a positive step and hoped that Islamabad would take more credible measures to dismantle alleged infrastructure used by militants for cross-border raids, India's Foreign Ministry said."

"Pakistan Determined To Curb Terror: U.S." "Dawn" (02/13)

"The United States on Thursday welcomed the announcement in Islamabad that the Mumbai terror attacks were partly planned on the Pakistani soil, saying that it showed Pakistan's seriousness in fighting terrorism, said U.S. State Department spokesman Robert Wood when asked to comment on Mr. Malik's statement."

"It Is Now India's Turn To Respond Positively, Says Zardari" "Daily Time" (02/13)

"Pakistan has investigated the Mumbai attacks transparently and it is now India's turn to respond positively, a private TV channel quoted President Asif Ali Zardari as saying on Thursday."

"Pakistan Proved It Is On The Level, Says FO" "The News" (02/13)

"The Foreign Office on Thursday underscored that Pakistan's response to the Indian dossier on Mumbai attacks showed the government's sincerity in seriously resolving the issue and hoped that India would reciprocate in the same spirit of cooperation, Foreign Office spokesperson Abdul Basit told a weekly news briefing in Islamabad."

"FIA Report Handed Over To Indian High Commissioner" "Dawn" (02/13)

"Pakistan handed over to India on Thursday its reply to the dossier on the Mumbai attacks along with a set of 30 questions seeking more information to further its investigations, Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit said at a weekly media briefing."

"Suspects To Be Tried In Camera" "Dawn" (02/13)

"All suspects arrested in connection with Mumbai attacks would be tried in the Adiala Central jail under the anti-terrorism law, informed sources told Dawn on Thursday. The trial will be held in camera."

"Indian Agencies Also Involved In Mumbai Attacks: Gen. (R) Hamid Nawaz" "Ummat" (02/13)

"Former caretaker Federal Minister Gen. (r) Hamid Nawaz while talking to this paper has said that India's own intelligence agencies were involved in Mumbai attacks, and India's sole aim is to isolate Pakistan in the international community."

"New Strategy To Be Realistic: Holbrooke" "The News" (02/13)

"Special U.S. Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke held separate meetings with PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif, PML-Q President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Pervaiz Elahi in Islamabad on Thursday. Holbrooke praised Pakistan's role in the war on terror and said that a realistic policy would be adopted keeping in view the problems faced by Pakistan."

"Zardari Made Strong Plea For U.S. Aid In Talks With Holbrooke" "Dawn" (02/13)

"President Asif Ali Zardari made a major pitch for urgent U.S. economic assistance to shore up Pakistan's crumbling economy during his meetings with U.S. special envoy Richard Holbrooke, the New York Times said on Thursday."

"New U.S. Policy To Be Discussed With Pakistan, Says Qureshi" "The News" (02/13)

"Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said that Pakistan has been cooperating with the U.S. and playing its role in the efforts against extremism and terrorism. Talking to BBC Radio, he said that it had been decided that the new policy of the Obama administration would be discussed with Pakistan."

"Dr. Khan Has No Access To Strategic Facilities, Says Foreign Office" "Daily Times" (02/13)

"We told U.S. Special Representative Richard Holbrooke that it was a closed chapter and he [Dr. Abdul Qadeer] has no access to any strategic facility, Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit told a weekly press briefing on Thursday."

"Pakistan Wish List Exposes Holbrooke Challenge" "Daily Time" (02/13)

"U.S. Special Envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke left Pakistan on Thursday with a wish list for aid, but in no doubt about the challenge of eradicating extremist havens in Pakistan."

"Holbrooke Reaches Kabul" "Dawn" (02/13)

"U.S. special envoy Richard Holbrooke arrived in Kabul on Thursday, on the second leg of a maiden tour aimed at turning around the war against militants in Afghanistan and Pakistan."

"Taliban Threaten To Attack More ANP Leaders" "Dawn" (02/13)

"Police have not found any information about terrorists involved in Wednesday's bomb blast which killed Awami National Party's MPA Alam Zeb Khan. Meanwhile, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan based in Orakzai Agency has claimed responsibility for the blast and threatened to continue attacks on lawmakers if the military operation was not stopped."

"Seven More Killed In Swat Amid Peace Rallies" "The News" (02/13)

"Five persons were killed and 12 others sustained injuries during the ongoing military operation in Swat valley on Thursday as people defied the curfew to stage rallies for peace for the third consecutive day."

"Four Taliban Killed In Bajaur" "Daily Time" (02/13)

"Security forces on Thursday retaliated to a Taliban rocket attack against a check-post at Shundi More in Bajaur Agency, resulting in the killing of four Taliban."

"Zardari To Visit China From February 20" "The Nation" (02/13)

"President Asif Ali Zardari will proceed to China from February 20 on a four-day long visit, Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit disclosed on Thursday in his weekly press briefing."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Cryptic Call," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/13)

"The effort made by the U.S. President to strike up a direct line of communication with Islamabad's top decision-maker is significant. Pakistan must capitalize on this opportunity to develop good will and understanding. The main focus of effort must be to put up a viable plan that can be implemented with support from Washington. The initiative taken by Barack Obama must be seized at this time as an opportunity to move forward and ensure that Pakistan remains a central planner in the tactics to be used to defeat militancy."

"Zardari-Obama Conversation: Troops Withdrawal And Dialogue Best Solution," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (02/13)

"The conversation between President Obama and President Zardari, as reported in the press, strengthens the impression that the U.S.

President convinced President Zardari for jointly fighting the war on terror with renewed fervor; notwithstanding the evident impending defeat of America and NATO."

"Pakistan Expects More From Washington," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (02/13)

"President Barack Obama has had his first direct interaction with President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday. The call signifies the importance that Washington attaches to Pakistan and the need for greater consultations and exchange of views so as to forge understanding on issues of mutual interest."

"Barack Obama's Phone To President Zardari," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (02/13)

"American President's phone to Pakistani President and assurance for cooperation is undoubtedly a cause of satisfaction. However, the need is that America should avoid those steps in the war on terror which are creating internal trouble in Pakistan and in this connection Pakistani proposals should be implemented."

"Barack Obama's Telephonic Contact With Pakistani Counterpart," an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (circ. 5000) (02/13)

"It is a matter of satisfaction for the public circles that before talking with President Obama, President Zardari presented the ground realities to Mr. Holbrooke candidly and did not hold anything back. Since the details of President Zardari's conversation with President Obama are not yet fully known, it would be premature to say how he represented Pakistani nation's sentiments about the country's sovereignty and security."

"Obama-Zardari Accord," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (02/13)

"The telephonic conversation between U.S. President Barack Obama and Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari shows that the U.S. has realized the need for a revision of the U.S. policy on the war on terror, especially in relation to Pakistan and Afghanistan."

"Durable Peace Wedded To Practical Steps," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (02/13)

"Mr. Holbrooke is perhaps the first American official who is visiting the country to listen, not to dictate. President Obama's phone call to President Zardari during Mr. Holbrooke's visit signifies that the new U.S. administration wants to formulate a new policy to strengthen bilateral relations. So far, this is all very encouraging."

"When This Sequence Of Bomb Explosion Is Going To Be Stopped?," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (02/13)

"No sooner U.S. Envoy Richard Holbrooke arrived in Peshawar, a remote controlled bomb ripped off in a town of the provincial capital. It seems that the government of Pakistan has never thought about the overall security situation of the FATA, Swat and other parts of the province, or perhaps it (the government) has become so helpless and yielding before the U.S. pressure and financial assistance that it cannot afford to maintain an independent policy."

"Terrorists Activities And Government's Pledge," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (02/13)

"We hope that joint efforts by the U.S. and Pakistan will bring the specter of terrorism under control. However, for that to happen, America and its allies must control the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, stop the drone attacks immediately, and let the Pakistan government carry out its functions within the country."

"Tragedy Of People And Government Upset With Terrorism," an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir.

55,000) (02/13)

"Our past rulers imposed the war on terror upon the people of Pakistan for their own monetary and short-term interests. Since there is a democratic government in the country now, is there any hindrance in revisiting the policy of cooperation to the U.S.?"

"Demonstration By Thousands Of People In Swat In Favor Of Peace," an editorial note in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (02/13)

"Pakistani nation heard the news with surprise that more or less 20 thousand people staged a demonstration in favor of Islamic laws and against the military operation in Swat valley. They gave a three-day deadline to the government for the implementation of Islamic laws, or else they will hold a long-march towards Islamabad.

Indeed there is no better system other than Islam for a Muslim country. Therefore, the demand of people of Swat is not unjustified."

"Monster Of Terrorism," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (02/13)

"The monster of terrorism is creeping from the fringe towards the centre.... The fact that the attack took place so brazenly on the day the American special envoy, Richard Holbrooke, was visiting the NWFP capital speaks volumes for the message the terrorists wanted to send: no one is now safe in Pakistan.... A look at the 'victories' chalked up by the militants should be enough to substantiate their claims that the government is not winning the war on terror."

"Taliban's Return To Kabul," an editorial note in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (circ. 5000) (02/13)

"Just how successful the Americans, NATO-ISAF troops and the puppet Karzai regime have been in eliminating terrorism in Afghanistan was visible when the Taliban militants yesterday attacked three government facilities near the Presidential palace... Taliban have threatened more such attacks in the future. In this perspective comes a statement from a former Soviet General who has said that the U.S. should hold talks with the Taliban if it wants to win this war."

"Graveyard Of Empires," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/13)

"As the Obama Administration works overtime to conduct a policy review on Pakistan and Afghanistan, the U.S. administration has to understand that there is no military solution to the issue. The independence-loving Afghans have never submitted to foreign aggression in the past, nor will they now.... The new strategy needs to emphasize reconstruction, development and diplomacy on both sides of the Durand Line."

"A New Strategy," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (02/13)

"The coordinated attacks by suicide bombers and gunmen in Kabul on Wednesday have underscored the fragile state of security in Afghanistan. The attacks, the worst violence in the Afghan capital came a day before the expected arrival of Richard Holbrooke and were clearly meant to send a signal of the Taliban's strength."

"The Holbrooke Visit," an op-ed by Najmuddin A. Shaikh in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/13)

"Holbrooke proposal that a Pakistani inter-agency task force led by our foreign minister should meet with a similar American taskforce to provide inputs for the ongoing review of America's Afghan policy and to plot the future course of U.S.-Pakistan relations. The focus will be on the principal goal - the elimination of terrorism and extremism - and to allow this focus to remain, the U.S. will use its good offices to prevent the Mumbai issue from boiling over and will, despite the media hype, accept assurances with regard to A.Q. Khan."

"U.S. Envoy Faces Tough South Asia Test," an op-ed by M. Ilyas Khan in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (02/13)

"The American special envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, Richard Holbrooke, has a tough task ahead of him.... As such, his test will lie in his ability to devise mechanisms to minimize the role of the Pakistani security establishment in charting the country's geo-political strategy. American money, which has helped keep this security establishment alive and strong, is the greatest leverage he can employ to achieve this aim."

"Visitor Or Harbinger?," an op-ed by M.A. Niazi in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/13)

"The visit by President Obama's envoy on Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, who expected only to have to sell the message that the Obama administration was as determined about the War On Terror as the Bush, found he still has some fire-fighting to do."

"Missing The Essence Of Talibanism," an op-ed by Ayaz Amir in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/13)

"The Obama administration is saying it will tie aid to Pakistan to its performance in fighting Taliban militancy. This thinking presupposes that American aid is what Pakistan needs and what can achieve victory over the Taliban. Experience tends to suggest otherwise. The Americans gave Pakistan money when Musharraf was president. Well, what did we do with that money and did it enhance our capacity to fight the Taliban?... The Americans are pouring money into Afghanistan. Has it stabilized the situation there?... This is the way with third world countries on the dole, especially in a war zone. If dollars alone could do the trick the U.S. would not have lost in Vietnam. Dollars alone cannot prove triumphant in Afghanistan or Pakistan."

"Mumbai Attacks FIR, Rehman Malik's Admission," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (02/13)

"Advisor on Interior Rehman Malik's press conference seems to be a statement of an approver. It is imperative that the government not let any harm come to the national interest. And if the government does not consider itself capable of safeguarding national interests and country's solidarity then it should quit governance voluntarily."

"Honesty And Hard Realities," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/13)

"This is the first time that a senior representative of a sitting Pakistani government has ever acknowledged that any terror attack on another nation has been planned in whole or part within the country. There can be no doubt that this admission could mean serious implications for the security services. We note that this frank admission comes at the end of Mr. Holbrooke's visit and follows the first telephone contact between Presidents Barack Obama and Asif Zardari. However, we do not make any causal linkage between these events. It is this kind of openness and up-front honesty that inspires confidence, both in our own government and within the nations around us. Now let us see reciprocity on the Indian side."

"India Should Appreciate Pakistan's Efforts," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/13)

"Now, with Mr. Malik's statement, it should be obvious that India needed to have shown more patience because putting together the links of such an extensive and sophisticated plan needs time.... At this stage, however, it is evident that Pakistan has covered impressive distance in unearthing the broad strands of this plan. Given its efforts, we should expect more disclosures in the near future."

"New American Strategy," an editorial in the Karachi-based right-wing pro-Jamaat-e-Islami Urdu daily "Jasarat" (cir. 3,000) (02/13)

"For turning a failed U.S. policy into success, a senior U.S.

diplomat Richard Holbrooke visited Pakistan. At a time when Mr. Holbrooke was in Pakistan, President Obama called Pakistani President Zardari for the first time. The bottom line of the this whole exercise is the acknowledgement of the fact that the U.S. has failed in pursuing its agenda, and now any possible change in the policies is aimed at tightening the U.S. grip over this region."

"Afghanistan Will Prove Vietnam Of Obama," editorial in the Karachi-based center-right sensationalist Urdu daily "Ummat" (cir. 33,000) (02/13)

"Had the U.S. defense experts learnt any lesson from the Vietnam War, they would have not planned to occupy Afghanistan, which in its entire history has never tolerated foreign invaders. The only respectable way left with the U.S. now is to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, or engage these troops in the development programs for the Afghan people instead of killing them."

"India Should Respect Pakistan's Good Intentions," an editorial in Hyderabad based independent and liberal Sindhi Daily "Ibrat" (cir. 80,000) (02/13)

"Pakistan has demonstrated a sense of responsibility with regard to the Mumbai attacks investigation. India must not question Pakistan's sincerity now. It is unfortunate that Ajmal Kasab is a Pakistani national, but it is wrong to blame the entire country, or the government for the deeds of an individual."
Patterson